

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 10, 2009

The Honorable Eric H. Holder
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder,

We are writing to request the status of the Department of Justice's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) inquiry into the conduct of attorneys that approved the May 2009 dismissal of voter intimidation charges against the New Black Panther Party and two individuals associated with the organization.

This inquiry was initiated after we, along with eight members of the House Judiciary Committee and the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, wrote Inspector General Glenn Fine to request a review of the matter.

We are concerned that close to three months after OPR's inquiry began, we have yet to receive a clear explanation of the basis on which the Civil Rights Division dismissed the complaint against the New Black Panther Party.

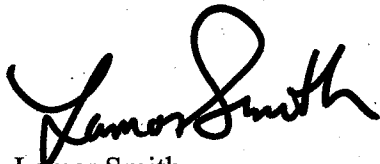
The elapsed time should have been sufficient for OPR to determine whether the Department's attorneys improperly considered partisan politics when they decided to dismiss this case. Further delay of the results of this important inquiry is worrisome and has the potential to appear as an effort by the Justice Department to prevent Congress from conducting its investigation into this matter.

The Hon. Eric Holder
Nov. 10, 2009
Page Two

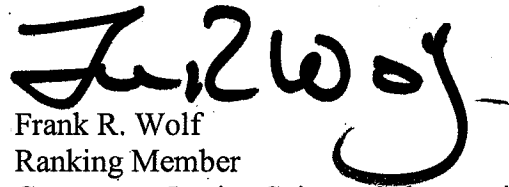
Congress and the American people must have confidence that the Department's Voting Rights Act enforcement is free of improper partisan political motives. Thus, it is important for Congress, in furtherance of its oversight obligations, to receive answers before the end of this year – before we enter the political season – so that we, and the people we represent, can have confidence that the Department's enforcement of the Voting Rights Act is consistent with congressional intent.

We look forward to your response, which we request be transmitted no later than November 20, 2009. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Lamar Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary



Frank R. Wolf
Ranking Member
Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee

cc: The Hon. John Conyers, Jr.